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ABSTRACT

Important aspects of field research in education were discussed at this seminar. A wide spectrum of topics included the theoretical foundations of field methodology, information gathering, access, validity, reliability, interpretation and explanation, limits of methods, ethical issues, and approaches to write-up and presentation of data. Four speakers addressed the conference topics. The first spoke of his participant observation study of a curricular situation and of his study of a single principal. The second speaker demonstrated his technique of videotaping teachers in an Ontario Indian village and an Italian neighborhood school. A study of a class in which he was a member was described by the third speaker. The final participant discussed his experiences in associating with high school students and his involvement with the Michigan Department of Education. The speeches addressed four aspects and methods of research: category selection; micro-ethnography; philosophical issues and education theory; and reduction, analysis, and research bias. (JD)

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Conference Series No. 2

REPORT OF A SEMINAR ON FIELD RESEARCH METHODS IN EDUCATION

by Philip A. Cusick

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REPORT OF A SEMINAR ON
FIELD RESEARCH METHODS IN EDUCATION

Philip A. Cusick*

Introduction

The purpose of the Seminar in Field Research Methods held by the Institute for Research on Teaching on February 10 and 11, 1977 was to discuss such important aspects of field research as the theoretical foundations of field methodology, information gathering, access, validity, reliability, interpretation and explanation, limits of the methods, ethical issues that arise when one enters into a personal relationship with those whom he or she is studying, and approaches to write-up and presentation of data.

The seminar was presented for the benefit of those individuals in the IRT who are currently involved in, or are developing, research projects in which the field methods of observation, interview or participant observation might be used. It was also intended for those individuals in the IRT and in the College of Education who seek to become better acquainted with these field research methods.

Four speakers addressed conference topics: Frederick Erickson of Harvard University, Harry Wolcott of the University of Oregon, Louis Smith of Washington

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*Philip Cusick is an associate professor in administration and higher education and a member of IRT's Basic Processes group.

University, and seminar chairman Philip Cusick of Michigan State University. All of the speakers have done widely-cited studies with field methods, and all are currently involved in research using those methods.

Attending the conference were faculty and staff of Michigan State University and the Institute for Research on Teaching, a large number of students from the College of Education and the IRT, and others who were interested in methodological questions, including researchers from the University of Wisconsin and representatives from the Michigan Department of Education.

The seminar was organized into morning and afternoon sessions; each of the four presenters addressed a separate session with a topic of his own choosing and then led a discussion of the issues he had raised.

As might be expected, the topics ranged over broad areas and included questions of research methods, accounts of various studies, and individual perspectives on research and education in general. The examples of research included a variety of techniques and a wide variety of situations. Wolcott spoke of his participant observation study of a curricular situation and of his study of a single principal. Erickson demonstrated his technique of videotaping teachers in an Ontario Indian village and an Italian neighborhood school. Smith described his study of a class in which he was a member, and Cusick discussed his experiences in associating with high school students and his involvement with the Michigan Department of Education.

Category Selection in Research

Harry Wolcott, the initial speaker, addressed the topic of category selection in research with the question, "How does one select the theoretical categories to use in organizing the data he collects into some intelligible whole?"

As Wolcott viewed it, the problem of category selection is difficult to explain, and it is quite difficult to develop any abstract principles about how this process might be undertaken. One develops categories depending on one's academic background, personal experiences, and the nature of the activities being studied. It is a highly individualistic and subjective process. When pressed, Wolcott admitted that he was like "the Wizard of Oz; just another Humbug from Omaha." He had no substantial empirical foundation that might be used to generate theoretical categories.

In discussing category selection Wolcott did not attempt to generalize to large numbers of researchers, nor did he make suggestions for those who would undertake such research. Rather, he presented himself as an experienced anthropologist and researcher, giving evidence and examples from his own experience on how he chooses his theoretical categories. He maintained that his categories in three studies came from two sources: first, his academic training as an anthropologist, and second, his personal experience as a public school teacher. He illustrated his categories and how they were selected by narrating a study in which he was involved. He related an attempt by a research and development team from a particular university and the central office staff of a public school system to implement a Planning Programming Budgeting Systems (PPBS) model into teacher planning and evaluating. As Wolcott unraveled the story, which developed in a case of severe conflict between the teachers and the PPBS advocates, he did so around the concept of "moiety," which comes from anthropology. "Moiety," he explained, is a French term meaning "half" and is frequently found in anthropological literature associated with systems of reciprocity, organized division of duties, and situations in which the members of one half of a social system undertake certain tasks and carry certain roles which complement those undertaken and

carried by members of the other half of the social system. It can even be used to explain modes of dress, badges of office, and codes of conduct.

Wolcott stated that he found the moiety concept and the conceptual framework it carries to be quite useful in organizing data from a system (school district) which had been divided into two groups over the issue of PPBS and its implementation. He labeled the groups "teachers" and "technocrats" and explained how individuals fit into one group or the other, and how the side one chose became important in his or her behavior. He also demonstrated that while the concept was not complete and could not account for all behavior, it proved quite useful in analyzing the system.

Following the narration and explanation of this study, Wolcott gave a further example of category selection by referring to a study he had done of an elementary school principal, The Man In the Principal's Office (Wolcott, 1974). In this case, he explained, the selection of the categories came from the initial question, "What does a principal do all day?". As Wolcott discovered, a principal plans, implements, maintains, and socializes. The categories he chose evolved naturally from the activities of his subject.

Wolcott seems to view category selection as essentially subjective; he contrasted this view by citing Margaret Mead, who maintains that the categories are in the data, and it is the job of the researcher to ferret them out. Wolcott defended his position by saying that in his own experience, he always found too much data, and what a field researcher had to do was "throw it out." The means by which one "throws it out" are the categories one uses to put some limits on what will be studied in any particular situation. Otherwise, he concluded, the data would remain eternally unintelligible. Both Erickson and Smith whole-heartedly agreed with this view.

Micro-ethnography

Frederick Erickson developed his presentation around a type of ethnography he refers to as "micro-ethnography."* An ethnographic account of a situation according to Erickson, is a "self-consciously distorted" view of that situation and can be likened to a caricature. He pointed out, for example, that caricatures emphasizing the nose of former president Richard Nixon may bear little empirical relationship to the actual nose, yet somehow, people know that the caricature is a "better Nixon nose" than the real nose. The picture, in this case, is truer and more revealing than the real thing. It is in this sense, he continued, that the ethnographer, even while self-consciously distorting the reality he seeks to illustrate, may present a better, truer, and more revealing picture than reality itself. His goal is the systematic elimination of all the non-essential elements of the reality and a heightened synthesis of the essence of the event. According to Erickson, an ethnographic account of a situation or event is valuable simply because it does present the essence and thereby provides a means of conceptually "getting back into the event" to examine it.

Erickson, whose academic background is in music, likened an ethnographic account of an event to a musical score, pointing out that the score certainly did not look like the piece sounded, nor did the account resemble the event; but in both cases, the representation assisted one in looking at the real event and in examining and asking questions about that real event. He re-

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*Erickson's advertised topic was the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods in educational research, but he passed through this topic quickly. He did say that he believed quantified methods to be quite applicable to research that is qualitative, but that the quantifying would be in terms of simple arithmetic, not higher mathematics. The problem was not that researchers lack the knowledge of higher math, but that these methods seem singularly inapplicable to the type of qualitative research done in education.

called one of his professors at Northwestern University prodding the students about Bach, telling them to take apart a piece of music by Bach, examine it, and speculate intelligently on "what Bach might do next." When one understands Bach he can do this, Erickson commented, adding that when one understands the essence of a social event, he can take his knowledge and make an intelligent prediction of what will take place next in the event.

Using this type of technique, Erickson and his co-workers have engaged in videotaping elementary classrooms in order to describe and investigate "the social rules governing language use." To participate in a social situation, he explained, a person must focus his language differently according to the way in which the situation is constructed. Erickson centered his study on elementary children because they, in many cases, are still in the process of finding out how to use language in given situations. He wished to discover how children "learn to go to school" and how they use language to create a culture within that school.*

The research technique employed was to focus one camera on a specific individual, use a second camera with a wide lens to watch the whole room, and give a microphone to one individual and let him or her carry it for the entire time. In the videotape (of a classroom in an Italian section of Boston) the researcher's attention was on a very small slice of the action, but with the kind of detailed observation that one can obtain with this kind of equipment, Erickson felt that he could pinpoint the details he needed to isolate those rules governing language use. He demonstrated how one

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*An interesting question arose at this point as to whether the rules Erickson was likely to uncover about a social situation were something that "everyone in that situation knew and carried with him" or whether they were "abstracted entities articulated only in some researcher's head." The question is a basic issue in social science. Erickson, after some reflection, was unable to answer it.

boy whom the teacher was "in love with" understood the social structure and knew how to behave in the class, while a girl who was quite unaware of the norms kept doing things wrong. When the girl made those social mistakes, it was the reactions of the other children which told the researchers she was wrong.

Erickson's second example of micro ethnographic technique concerned a Native American elementary teacher in a school with Indian children in the upper Great Lakes area of Ontario. Erickson pointed out that the teacher never called to a child by name when conducting a class session except to assign him some maintenance task; she never called out to some named individual child to answer a question, as do many white teachers. He also pointed out her precisely measured way of walking about and instructing the children, who had an orderly and predictable way of responding to her. Erickson contrasted this with the case of another teacher in the same school, this one a white male. His way of dealing with the children was less effective (at least ostensibly) than that of the Indian teacher. Erickson observed that over the course of the year, the white teacher had learned that one did not refer to an Indian youngster by name within a large group and focus the attention of the class on him or her; similarly, however, the youngsters had learned to call to that teacher by name over the heads of their peers. Both sides were learning to deal with each other and, in the process, were changing their behavior and inventing new sets of rules to use in this new situation, resulting in a case of cultural transmission and cultural creation.

Erickson's final illustration of the rules that govern behavior in social situations was a video tape of an Italian family at home, eating dinner. This was the family of one of the youngsters in the tape of the

Boston classroom.

Several questions were raised at the conclusion of Erickson's presentation; in particular, "under what set of circumstances might one choose to engage in the micro-study espoused by Erickson, and under what circumstances might one choose a broad macro-ethnography as described by Wolcott?" Also, "If one does study a micro-social system, may he or she expect that system to mesh into some larger system?" These questions led to a number of thoughtful and philosophical comments, though no general agreement was reached, suggesting that perhaps these issues are really not the purview of any specific discipline or research method.

Philosophical Issues and Educational Theory

Louis Smith focused his seminar presentation on the three major philosophical approaches to educational theory. While a Fullbright-Hayes fellow at Massey University in New Zealand, Smith came under the influence of a group of social scientists engaging in what they referred to as the Hurst-O'Conner debate. He roughly paraphrased the debate like this: O'Conner maintains that educational theory is scientific theory and can be researched and explained as such. (This was the view Smith had brought to New Zealand from his background in psychology.) According to Hurst, however, educational theory is a blend of moral-ethical theory and scientific theory. There is also a third perspective represented by Struthers, who argues that educational theory is primarily ethical-moral theory.

As Smith explained, he is presently trying to work out a satisfactory answer to which of these views is most correct, and is trying to do so by using "Mrs. Kay's drawing class" as the referent.

"I want to draw you into my own confusion," Smith told the audience

as a means of involving them in some of his own reflections on curriculum and educational theory. He said he began the study of Mrs. Kay's drawing class when he found himself getting "fat and forty." His children gone, he began to explore adult education classes. Taking a class in charcoal drawing, he found he was unable to be a mere student, but started to take notes on the class, becoming what he referred to as an "influential true participant." Not merely an observer, interviewer, or even a participant observer, he was literally the object of the curriculum.

Mrs. Kay was a dignified woman who held credentials as a professional artist. She taught by asking the students to draw some object such as a bottle or a piece of furniture, giving individual advice to each student as he or she undertook the task. She had a number of principles which she freely expressed: "Anyone can learn to draw," "We draw to express," "Drawing makes you see," "Draw what you see," etc. The product of the class for each student was a portfolio of ten drawings. Other than these principles, however, Smith's recollections held little about Mrs. Kay or the other members of the class, consisting mainly of his reflections on his own mental processes while the lessons were in progress.

Smith began his analysis of the drawing class with the question, "What happens when we shift from description to analysis to recommendation?" His answer was that as soon as you unleash any recommendation, you complicate all the issues. For example, he gave a standard definition for curriculum as "a program or course of activities explicitly organized so pupils can obtain certain objectives." Smith finds three "shoulds" in this definition; one "should" concerning intention, one concerning activities, and one on desired learning. For him, this means that his former assumptions about educational theory being scientific have to be questioned.

Smith then presented another definition of education. "Education involves processes which transmit what is valuable in an intelligible and voluntary manner and which create in the learner a desire to achieve it." Again, he pointed out that implicit in this definition or construct are a number of moral and ethical constraints. Here it would seem that O'Conner may be wrong and Hurst right. To illustrate this point, Smith returned to the drawing class example. Suppose one completes a study and then makes a recommendation, he asked, does it complicate the issue? Suppose one decided that after the formal drawing class had ended, Mrs. Kay should have created an artistic interest group and tried to hold on to students' interest in art by periodically putting them into contact with one another. What this "should" does, according to Smith, is put a number of confusing elements into the study, such as student interests, activities, Mrs. Kay's time, the students' out-of-class lives, and the purposes of the original class. In fact, he added, it seriously reduces the impact of the teacher and enlarges the impact of the impinging elements.

Other possible "shoulds" that could come from this study are: should the students explore other art forms, join a local artist guild, or take private lessons? Smith suggested that any recommendation, any "should" brings in confounding and conflicting elements to the point that one wonders where to draw the line between science and ethics. Suggestions force departure from a scientific basis and take one into the realm of intentions, purposes, value, and personal meaning. Therefore, these inferences can only be weakly supported. Such questions and issues, Smith concluded, illustrate the fundamental problems in ascertaining truth.

Reduction, Analysis, and Research Bias

Philip Cusick dealt with problems of reduction, analysis, and research

bias in the final session of the conference. Reduction is the fundamental problem in social science field research methods, Cusick said, and pointed out that not one of the theoretical concepts frequently spoken of in educational research (e.g, alienation, motivation, achievement, annomie, organizational climate, satisfaction, community) has a set of concrete, intersubjective and generalizable indicants which can be depended upon to show up in all situations in which the particular term might be used.

Cusick admitted that theoretical terms are indispensible and can be tied to empirical reality, but rejected the view that research had, or was even capable of, uncovering the "necessary" set of indicants associated with any one term. Therefore, he said, when one generalized from a study in the social sciences (whether his N is one or one thousand), his generalizations will always be weak. A researcher has no assurance that the indicators uncovered in one situation (and from which he infers some theoretical concept) will be found in the next or even similar situation, Cusick continued. Field studies, frequently referred to as "merely exploratory" are no more or less exploratory than any other social science research. Nor are they merely anticipatory to studies using quantified methods where the object is to make more precise generalizations. As long as the problem of reduction remains in its present state (philosophically, one could argue that this is a permanent condition), studies with broad populations are equally as exploratory as field studies with an N of one. According to Peter Park in Sociology Tomorrow, "An inferential concept is always only partially tapped for its meaning, and consequently when its relationship to another concept revealed by the indicators is contrary to what might be expected from a theory, we cannot reject the theory" (Park, 1969, p. 157).

In Cusick's view, a field study is a lengthy reduction sentence in narrative form. Citing Hempel (1965, p. 109) who in this case cited Rudolf Carnap, Cusick wrote a bilateral reduction sentence: $C_x \supset (O_x \equiv E_x)$. Roughly translated; under certain conditions (C), one may infer an instance of the theoretical concept (Q) if and only if certain behavioral indicants (E) are present. "E" is used to infer the existence of "Q" in situation "C." In social science concepts, the possibilities under "E" are theoretically unlimted, and the job of a field study is to give flesh to the theoretical concept by explaining in observable terms the indicants "E." Hence, a field study is a lengthy reduction effort.

Field studies, when done well, are always valid but cannot be depended upon to be reliable in a traditional sense according to Cusick. It is the researcher's job to take on, understand, describe, and explain the perspective of the "acting unit" he/she is observing; it is this perspective that is the important element when one is trying to understand social life. Cusick said that according to Herbert Blumer (1969, p. 145), it is the illustration of this perspective that gives field research and in particular, participant observation, its validity. When we speak of reliability in the traditional sense, however, we phrase it in terms of, "If another researcher went in at another time, could he uncover this same element, and would his data turn out the same?" Cusick maintained that this might or might not be the case, and that it was almost an unfair question to ask of the method. Should the makeup of the group or situation or social unit change, he continued, the answer might very well be no, but that should not detract from the validity of the study.

However, the element of researcher bias, that is, the element of the

researcher taking on the "bias" of the subject (in effect using his own humanity as a researcher tool), makes it unlikely that such studies could be undertaken by a researcher who is also trying to evaluate. Cusick said that in his studies, the researcher always came to see the behavior of his subjects as reasonable. Indeed, the point is that normal people do make reasonable adjustments to situations. Evaluation, however, demands that a separate set of criteria be held over against the situation; in field studies, this is not only inappropriate to a study in which the researcher is trying to become like the subjects, but it could lead to researcher blindness. Citing a study in which he associated with high school students, Cusick said that had he gone into the school to find out why the students did not achieve more, he never would have seen their group activities as reasonable. Rather than trying to understand those group activities, he would have spent his time trying to find ways to change their behavior rather than studying it.

Cusick's final point dealt with the justification of field studies — "research for what?" (Earlier rejecting the idea that field studies are merely anticipatory to research with more predictable results, he had argued that a field study is a lengthy reduction effort.) He addressed the following question: "Why would anyone undertake a field study, or indeed any study, if the end were not to gather some, at least, in principle, control of a situation?" He illustrated this line of thinking with a schema; Generalization $\longrightarrow$ Prediction $\longrightarrow$ In-principle control $\longrightarrow$ Institution (Schema A). As he explained, the usual line of thinking on the issue follows the argument that since it is possible to empirically generalize, it is also possible to predict and control events (at least in principle), and to raise some knowledge to an objective realm, make it public, and lodge

it in an institution. The institution can then become the keeper of that objective knowledge. For examples of this point, Cusick mentioned the research in colleges of education, the end of which is to better control teachers and students; the situation described by Wolcott, where PPBS advocates tried to implement their program and control teacher behavior; the aims of the state department of education to control (or "coordinate," as they say) administrators and teachers; the efforts by people doing research for administrators, the end of which is greater objectivity, greater predictability, and hence, greater control of teachers.

The problem, Cusick said, is that the direct object of the verb "control" is often another person. He admitted to being bothered that so many people in education seem to undertake research in which the only end is to control someone else. To him, "control" is at best a questionable ideal, particularly for educators, and even more particularly since it seems to be the only goal. While admitting to enjoying the benefits of an organized society, Cusick maintained that he saw no reason why research efforts had to be directed so heavily in favor of institutions and control.

In contrast to the Prediction-Control-Institution schema, Cusick presented what he referred to as Schema B: Explanation $\longrightarrow$ Understanding $\longrightarrow$ Emancipation $\longrightarrow$ Individual. As most philosophers of science agree, he explained, knowledge can be used for more than just prediction. Knowledge helps a person understand and deal effectively with his world. According to Schema B, knowledge should lead to understanding, and then to the emancipation of the individual from control by others—particulary those in institutions. As one comes to understand his world better, he is better able to place himself on an equal footing with the dynamics of that world, and

especially with those who are attempting to manipulate him through their control of knowledge. According to Cusick, this in itself is a worthy educational ideal, one that has been too long ignored by educational researchers who are too engrossed with their view of themselves as researchers and their human subjects as pigeons. A researcher's job, he insisted, is not merely to help teachers control students but to help them understand the world of education in the classroom and school district so that they may deal with it in a free and open manner. The researcher's ideal should not be merely to help administrators make person-proof decisions, but to help them understand the institutional dynamics of which they are a part. A researcher's referent should be the individual's growth and learning, at least as often as it is objective and therefore institutionalized knowledge.*

Summary

In summing up the two day seminar there are a number of points that should be stressed. First of all, it was easily apparent that a number of methodologies come under the heading of "field research." Wolcott referred to himself as "a flat footed anthropologist" who in the PPBS study simply "drove down the road and parked myself in the teachers' lounge." Over a long period of time, he became sympathetic to the teachers' point of view and wrote his study from that perspective. Yet, in another project, he literally shadowed the principal whom he was studying. In all of his studies Wolcott admitted to "painting with a broad brush." Erickson's focus was much narrower. His methods demanded a heavy investment in equipment needed to record and capture the minute events which he wanted to study. Cusick referred to himself in different studies as a participant observer, an

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*This view became the topic of spirited discussion.

observer-interviewer, and simply as an interviewer. Smith came up with perhaps the most novel approach when he termed his role in one study as that of an "influential true participant." That is, he was a central participant in the event he was studying.

These techniques range from observer to participant observer to participant, but they all have three things in common. First, they focus on human social behavior, second, they demand that the researcher be in the presence of the people he is studying, and third, they focus on a single social event. Seminar participants seemed to agree that after the researcher is in the presence of the event he wishes to study, he may choose the appropriate methods.

Consider a question that this point raises: "How does one select an event, and how is this choice of event affected by the choice of theoretical categories?" This is an important question which addresses the major objection that many have toward field studies. The question, "How do you know you are not studying your own perceptions?" is actualiy referring to events and categories. Might we say, for instance, that Erickson imposed the concept of "rules governing language use" upon his observations, and that, indeed, he took that concept with him into those classrooms he studied, in effect creating his own event? We might also question whether or not Cusick took the concept of an organization being concerned with the "reduction of uncertainty" into that bureaucracy with him, and used the concept to screen out any observed behavior that did not fit the concept. Also, it could have been possible that the concept of moiety was stronger and more real in Wolcott's mind than it was between the teachers and technocrats in the district he studied. (This is a legitimate question, particularly since all the principals—Erickson, Cusick, and Smith—were strong in their sup-

port of Wolcott when he described his category selection process as personal and further admitted that he used these categories to "throw out" unwanted data.)

The fact is, the way one selects one's categories has a great deal to do with what one chooses to call his "event." There is a great deal of action, interaction, and other behavior in any social situation, and one has to find some way to make sense of it. To do this, one selects categories, but the way in which one selects those categories is very important.

In an attempt to resolve this issue with some reasonableness, the participants in the seminar conlcuded that the problem of category selection and event definition are endemic to the social sciences whether one uses field methods and places himself into the situation, or whether he uses some data gathering and analysis methods which allow him to remain remote from the scene. When one takes himself into the event he is studying it does not increase those problems, it merely makes them more obvious, since in those cases, the researcher opens himself to the vast amount of unwanted data. When one is remote, he does not see all that extraneous behavior and, therefore, can more easily ignore it. Within this view, the individual researcher must be charged with developing a descriptive narrative that is sufficiently valid in order that the categories he does use will be well substantiated, and the event he defines will be believable.

As much as possible, then, the categories have to reflect the data. This point is reminiscent of what Cusick said about the problem of reduction and the subsequent problem of reliability. As he explained it, there are a potentially unlimited number of indicants and sets of indicants that one might use to study any theoretical concept of the social sciences, and what one

does choose to call his empirical indicants depends to a large extent on common sense. This puts the researcher and his perceptions in a very central position in both data collection and data analysis, and in both event selection and category application.

While this admission would appear to make field studies suspect, those who advocate field studies would argue that they are not more vulnerable than any other social science researcher. It is just their involvement in and proximity to the event they are studying that make these particular problems so visible. There is a related point: If one uses for his categories those developed by the participants themselves (either consciously or unconsciously), then the categories and the descriptions will reflect the participants' perspectives of their own situations. One may then say that "this is the way the participants make sense of their world" and when one can say that, validity is assured. That is what Erickson was looking for when he attempted to discern those "rules governing language use" among his elementary school subjects.

There also exists the related problem of whether one may conduct field research for evaluative purposes. The problem here is that an "evaluative" frame means that one has selected certain categories prior to entering the situation and intends to hold his observations against those criteria for evaluative purposes. This procedure was discouraged. One thing that all the participants agreed upon was that, as much as possible, they tried to refrain from imposing categories on the situation and instead, tried to develop those categories at the same time they were developing their descriptions. While category development is not "pure," events should be approached with some openness to behaviors. If one enters an event—with all its accompanying behaviors and possible interactions—with a preconceived ex-

planatory set, one may be blinded to many important aspects of the situation. It was suggested that while field studies may be used for evaluative purposes, evaluation should not be the intent of the researcher. The evaluation tasks would better be left to outsiders who should keep in mind that field researchers almost always find that their subjects are behaving "reasonably." It is, after all, the major intent of the researcher to "understand" the subject's world from the subject's point of view.

Admittedly, this brief report is not able to capture all of the dialogue that went on during the seminar. Following each presentation, there were exciting and worthwhile discussions between the presenters and the rest of the group.* Wolcott's presentation stimulated discussion of macro-ethnography and category selection; Erickson's talk brought forth the group's ideas on micro-ethnography and possible relations between the small world he portrayed and larger worlds; Smith's views raised questions of ethics and even questions about the "shoulds" inherent in the Institute for Research on Teaching; and Cusick's presentation generated justification for field studies and for research in the social sciences. It was an exciting two days.

*Each of the four sessions during the two-day conference was tape recorded. The tapes are available through the IRT Information Center, 133 Erickson Hall, MSU.

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Schedule

SEMINAR ON FIELD RESEARCH METHODS

Institute for Research on Teaching

The IRT will present a 2-day seminar on field research methods on Thursday, February 10 and Friday, February 11, 1977. The invited speakers include Frederick Erickson of Harvard University, Louis Smith of Washington University and Harry Wolcott of the University of Oregon. Philip Cusick will chair the meetings.

Thursday, February 10: 9:00 a.m.

Harry Wolcott, University of Oregon

Topic 1: The Orientation of the Ethnographer
Topic 2: The Use of Anthropological Models in the Organization and Analysis of a Field Study
Topic 3: Discussion

Thursday, February 10: 1:30 p.m.

Frederick Erickson, Harvard University

Topic 1: Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methodologies in Education
Topic 2: Discussion

Friday, February 11: 9:00 a.m.

Louis Smith, Washington University

Topic 1: Ms. Kay's Drawing Class: An Example of an Anthropological Study in a Classroom
Topic 2: Discussion

Friday, February 11: 1:00 p.m.

Philip Cusick, Michigan State University

Topic 1: Problems of Reduction Analysis in Field Studies
Topic 2: Uses of Field Studies
Topic 3: Discussion

In addition to these listed topics, our speakers will address the related issues of the inadequacy of initial theories, the problems of carrying conceptual frameworks into a field situation, how to conduct oneself in a field study, recommendations, field research as evaluation and the problem of researcher bias.